

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 17197

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, NATO, BE
SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL BELGIAN REQUEST FOR U.S. SUPPORT
FOR BELGIAN IMPROVED HAWK PARTICIPATION (HELIP)

REF: BRUSSELS 17116

1. ERIK BAL, FOREIGN MINISTRY CHIEF OF NATO AFFAIRS,
REVIEWED STATUS OF HELIP WITHIN BELGIAN GOVERNMENT
WITH US NOVEMBER 28.

2. HE SAID THAT HE REALIZED THAT THE BELGIANS WERE
LATE COMERS TO HELIP AND THAT HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE
PROBLEMS A BELGIAN REQUEST FOR ECONOMIC OFFSET AT THIS
STAGE POSED FOR THE USG AND FOR RAYTHEON. REGARDLESS
OF WHERE THE FAULT FOR THIS SITUATION LAY, BAL STRESSED
THAT BELGIAN PARTICIPATION IN HELIP MIGHT WELL TURN ON
THE ISSUE OF COMPENSATIONS. ACCORDING TO BAL ECONOMIC,
FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL QUESTIONS PRESENTLY WEIGHED HEAVILY
IN BELGIAN CONSIDERATION OF THEIR PARTICIPATION IN
HELIP. HE EXPRESSED THE CONCERN THAT, GIVEN THE
PRESENT STATE OF THE BELGIAN ECONOMY, BELGIAN DEFENSE
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REQUIREMENTS RAN THE RISK OF BEING "NIBBLED AWAY".
THE RESULT WAS THAT BELGIUM MIGHT HAVE TO OPT FOR CAN-
CELLING ITS PARTICIPATION IN VARIOUS PROGRAMS (INCLUDING
HELIP) OR BUYING SOMETHING OF LESS MILITARY VALUE BUT
WITH MORE ECONOMIC COMPENSATIONS, THEREBY EITHER
WEAKENING THE ALLIANCE OR DAMAGING PROGRESS TOWARD
STANDARDIZATION/INTEROPERABILITY.

3. RETURNING TO THE SPECIFIC CASE OF HELIP, BAL SAID THAT BELGIAN PARTICIPATION WAS UNDER SERIOUS AND PRIORITY STUDY AND THAT NO DECISION HAD YET BEEN MADE. HE ASKED FOR OUR HELP IN EITHER PRESSURING RAYTHEON TO FIND ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC OFFSET WITHIN OR OUTSIDE OF HELIP OR TO FIND WAYS TO PROVIDE SOME FORM OF USG GUARANTEES OF COMPENSATION. BAL TOLD US THAT THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT DID NOT SEE ANY POSSIBLE COMPENSATION IN A POSSIBLE EUCOM RELOCATION, THE CONSTRUCTION FOR WHICH WOULD BE HANDLED BY COMPETITIVE BID AND MIGHT WELL BE WON BY A DUTCH OR BRITISH FIRM.

4. COMMENT: WE HAVE NOW HEARD FROM SEVERAL SOURCES THAT BELGIAN PARTICIPATION IN HELIP WILL BE A DIFFICULT CABINET DECISION AND THAT HELIP SUPPORTERS WITHIN THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT NEED SOME TOKEN OF USG RESPONSIVENESS TO THEIR OFFSET CONCERNS. THE ISSUE MAY WELL TURN ON THE USG'S ABILITY TO MAKE AN APPROPRIATE GESTURE BEFORE NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING IN DECEMBER. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE USG REPLY MAY BE OF LESS IMPORTANCE THAN AN EXPRESSION OF WILLINGNESS TO ADDRESS BELGIAN CONCERNS. OLSEN

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